

I have finished reading Leroux's trilogy, To a Dubious Salvation, which you so kindly gave me, and although you asked me to let you know what I thought of it, it would take a sizeable term paper to discuss it adequately. It was certainly most rewarding and worthwhile. Anyway, a few random thoughts in passing. Like any major work Leroux encompasses momentous themes (much of them symbolically), such as Good vs. Evil or the coexistence of Good & Evil (a la Herman Melville in Silly Budd) and Reality vs. Illusion. Welgevonden appears to be a microcosm of the structure of South Africa and its society or perhaps the world. Jack Silverstein accepts the situation for what it is, including his wife's infidelity and the unsavory parts of life. It is interesting that he has his outlet and play for confession in his shouting out during the hissing noise in the steam room where nobody else can hear what he is confessing. Henry Van Eden, the naive Gentile idealist who has come to marry Jack's daughter, has to be instructing in realities, and doesn't see his fiancée Salome until he is aware of what Jack is teaching him. It is symbolic that Henry guesses wrong and dresses out of harmony with the other guests at the nighttime parties of the Silversteins. Henry, after Salome's death, adjusts in becoming a doctrinaire protector of Welgevonden, which gives him purpose and security.

Adam Koolman Van Eden-Silverstein, Henry's giant idiot son, represents perhaps the decay of the ruling class in the dumb unawareness of his accidental killing by brute strength -- an action similar to Zerkow Lenny in John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men. Sergeant Demosthenes de Goede, seemingly a counter-part of both Adam and Henry, is the protector of the society and of law and order against crime, but in his purity and goodness is inarticulate and stammering -- thus symbolic of the "Dubious Salvation".

I find Leroux's style reminiscent of the ethereal, shadowy, intuitive world of Hesse and Kafka, in which imaginings and real happenings flow together and remain indistinguishable with sometimes the former seeming more plausible than the latter.

So much for my thoughts. The book is a wonderful addition to my collection at home. I haven't gotten into the Quarterlies you gave me yet, but they do leave me something to anticipate.

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